

News Council hearing on Panax cancelled

National News Council has postponed the hearing scheduled for August 16 on the Panax Newspapers dispute.

Panax withdrew from the hearing August 11, announcing it would not participate until conditions providing "a fair and impartial (new) hearing" are met.

The Council issued a 12 to 1 decision last month on the Panax controversy, which involves alleged pressure by publisher John McGoff on editors to run news stories critical of President Carter.

Its decision called McGoff's policy regressive, a throwback to the crass episodes that marked the journalism of a "gone era," and said he had "highlighted one of the great underlying public fears about newspaper chains—that what the public reads is directed from afar by autocratic ownership."

In a letter sent to all Council members August 11, Panax lawyers said the company would not participate in a Council hearing until certain conditions are met. The conditions stipulated were:

"The Council must rescind and retract the prior denunciations and criticism of Panax Corporation, its management and policies, which were taken impetuously and in utter disregard of the Council's established rules of procedure.

"The Council's staff must comply with the requirement in its own rules—not done to date—that 'a complaint must be filed in writing, stating the name and address of the complainant, the precise grounds for the complaint, and the facts relating to it.'

"Panax must be provided with all the information originally requested on July 28, part of which (Council Chairman Norman Isaacs) had brushed off as neither 'relevant nor pertinent.'

"Because of his repeated demonstrations of consuming bias . . . Isaacs must be disqualified from deliberating, voting or otherwise participating as Chairman or a member of the Council in any future hearing."

Claiming the Council's July 8 decision
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Hearing off

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reflected its "kangaroo court" behavior, the letter stated: "No Panax Corporation editors were ordered to publish news stories they found unacceptable and no editors were discharged directly or indirectly for violating any such order. Indeed, many Panax editors ignored the two stories in question."

The Council's decision, it charged, was authored and issued with blatant disregard for the fundamental fairness required for any semblance of due process."

Buys weekly

Jack Waldrip is the new owner of the Gainesville (Ga.) Tribune, and has assumed the position of publisher.

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US NEWSPAPER MAGNATE JOHN P MCGOFF'S LINKS TO WHITE SOUTH
AFRICAN LEADERS DISCUSSED; IS PART OWNER, WITH SOUTH AFRICAN
MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND INTERIOR CORNELIUS MULDER, OF
TRANSVAAL RETIREMENT ESTATE; MCGOFF'S CHAIN, PANAX, PUBLISHES
"CONTROVERSIAL COMIC BOOK SERIES FOR SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS WHICH
USC PROF CAROL THOMPSON CALLS '150% RACIST'; MCGOFF TRIED TO
BUY ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS; AN
ANTI-APARTHEID GROUP, IN '75; SAYS NEWS MEDIA SHOULD SUPPORT
GOVERNMENT; MCGOFF'S CAREER AND VIEWS DISCUSSED (L)